



Embassy of the United States of America
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Installment Ninety Four

Ask the Consul – Addressing Common Questions and Complaints

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown welcomes applications to visit the United States. Not every applicant qualifies for a visa under U.S. immigration law, and the Embassy hears many questions and complaints from applicants who are denied a visa. This edition of Ask the Consul aims to address the most frequently received comments and provides an understanding of how visa decisions are made.

I have good ties and only want to “take a walk!” Why won’t you issue me a visa!?

While you may be a qualified applicant with good intentions for a short visit to relatives in the U.S., many other applicants with similar circumstances have traveled on visitor visas with the intention of staying long-term and working illegally. By regulation, the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy must err on the side of caution to prevent abuses of visitor visas.

I don’t think the officer was fair! Who can I complain to if I did not receive a fair decision?

Consular officers review all cases carefully and give equal consideration to all applicants. By U.S. law, an officer’s decision is final, and this decision cannot be appealed. You may re-apply, if you wish, and a different officer will interview you. If your circumstances have not changed from one application to another, however, a new interview will likely not result in a different decision. If you believe you were treated unfairly, you may contact visageorge@state.gov, or call 225-7965 . While contacting the consular section will not change the officer’s decision, this is an opportunity to comment on the visa process.

I came with all my documents to prove my income, house, car and ties, but the officer wouldn’t even look at them! Why won’t you look at my documents!?

The U.S. Embassy used to consider documents, but received too many fraudulent ones. The officers, in turn, had no way to distinguish between genuine and fraudulent documents. This

phenomenon was not unique to Guyana, and now every U.S. Embassy in the world relies first and foremost on the interview, rather than documents.

“Why does a visa cost so much and why do I have to pay even if I’m refused one?”

The cost of printing a visa is very small, but the cost of processing an application, interviewing an applicant, providing security and maintaining computer systems is very high. The application fee is not an issuance fee, but provides the funds required to operate the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy.

I am going on a legitimate training, paid for by my employer. I cannot advance my career without this training, but you turned me down!

- OR -

I am going to a legitimate sports competition, and I am an official competitor. I cannot advance in the sports field unless I am able to compete, but you turned me down!

The U.S. Embassy certainly understands the need for training and competing on the international stage. While it would be beneficial for everyone invited for a U.S.-based training or sports event to participate, under U.S. law a visa applicant must qualify for the visa independently of an invitation to an event or training. This means that a legitimate training or sports event will not compensate for weak ties outside of the U.S. The interviewing officers must also discern legitimate event participants from applicants who cite an event as a reason for travel, but intend to stay illegally in the U.S.

I have to care for my sick mother! My sister just died and I need to go to the funeral! I can’t believe the U.S. Embassy would deny me a visa in these circumstances !?

The U.S. Embassy certainly understands that many Guyanese families are divided between the U.S. and Guyana. While an unfortunate turn of events with an applicant’s U.S.-based family directly involves the applicant in Guyana, any such applicant must qualify for a visa on his or her own merits and without reference to the family emergency.. A legitimate emergency or death will not compensate for weak ties outside of the U.S. The interviewing officers must also distinguish legitimate emergencies from applicants who cite an emergency as a reason for travel, but intend to stay illegally in the U.S.

The officer barely even spoke to me, I can’t believe I wasted all this money for that!

The U.S. Embassy sees well over 100 visa applicants a day. All applicants must wait in the consular section waiting room. In order to reduce this time for everyone, officers review each application before the applicant appears at the window, then asks the minimal number of questions needed to reach a decision. If an application is clearly deniable or clearly approvable, the officer will spend less time with that application than with others.

In addition to common complaints, the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy takes pride in the positive feedback it receives from visa applicants in the form of comment cards. When applying for a visa, applicants are welcome to complete an anonymous comment card in the waiting room concerning the U.S. Embassy's customer service. Every card is read and considered.

"Ask the Consul" is a bi-weekly column from the U.S. Embassy answering questions about U.S. immigration law and visa issues. If you have a general question about visa policy please email it to us at AskGeorge@state.gov. We select questions every other week and publish the answers in Stabroek News and on our website at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/ask-the-consul.html> For more information about visas please see <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov> or <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/>.

Other than the questions we select, we DO NOT respond to questions sent to Ask the Consul. Please contact the visa inquiries unit (email visageorge@state.gov or call 225-7965 between 8 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday) if you have questions about a specific case.